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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the changing nature of the relationship between family and school and describes an intervention program designed to promote a positive home-school relationship. Children's timeless developmental needs and the child rearing task of parents and school staff are outlined. The manner in which scientific and technological developments have altered the needs of children and the task of adults and institutions responsible for rearing children are explored. In addition, the impact of relevant economic, educational, and other social arrangements on the ability of parents and the school to carry out the child rearing and educational tasks are discussed. A model of desirable family-school relationships for the present and the future is presented. One intervention program which has been successful in promoting this kind of relationship, the Yale Child Study Center Schools Program in Martin Luther King School in New Haven, Connecticut, is described. (JMB)

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE FAMILY

by

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Introduction

Every society must make adequate provision for the development and socialization of its children. The family, the smallest unit of society, is universally charged with this responsibility. In our society, and in most in the world, the school has been developed to aid in this task. Thus, the family and the school are the backbones of society, the foundation and center beam upon and around which it grows and thrives or sags and collapses.

For the young, the family and the school are the templates of society, miniatures and models of the world they must function in as adults. Parents, teachers and other school personnel are important carriers of the culture. Through interaction with children they stimulate their psychological, social, moral and intellectual development consistent with the expectations of a given society.

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In order to do so adequately, caretaking or child rearing persons must have a reasonable level of psychological, social and intellectual competence and morality themselves. They must be motivated to carry out the child rearing task in a fashion deemed desirable by the society. Economic, political, educational and other societal conditions and arrangements and individual endowment determine whether these conditions exist or not.

Driven largely by scientific and technological developments, societal conditions have changed over time, dramatically in the last 75 years. So too has the relationship between home and school, though not always recognized and responded to appropriately. For this reason it will be helpful here to outline the timeless development needs of children and the child rearing task of parents and school staff before addressing the relationship between home and school. I will then explore the manner in which scientific and technological developments have altered the needs of children and the task of adults and institutions responsible for rearing children. In addition I will discuss the impact of relevant economic, educational and other social arrangements on the ability of parents and the school to carry out the child rearing and educational tasks.

Finally, I will discuss and present a model of the kind of family and school relationships needed for these two institutions to collaborate successfully in carrying out their critical socializing and education functions today and in the future.

Child Development and Child Rearing

Children are born into the world totally dependent for survival on parents and other caretakers. They possess only a biological potential for growth and a bio-psychological force often called aggressive, libidinal or survival energy. They have a capacity to form a psycho-social attachment to caretaking or otherwise frequently interacting individuals. These individuals are in a position to influence the growth and development of the dependent child in every area. The task of the caretaker is to help the child move from total dependency through a level of maturation necessary to function optimally as an adult in a given society.

Children are born with numerous potential capacities which can be developed. I will outline rearing and resultant development in the six most critical areas--biological, cognitive or thinking, speech and language, psychological, social and moral. Such areas are often referred to as lines of development.

The diffuse, unchanneled life energy of infants and toddlers is first expressed in aggressive, selfish and self-centered behavior. They want what they want now, instantly, immediately, even yesterday. When frustrated, they bite, fight, and throw temper tantrums. The desired toy of another child is taken, not requested or shared. A brother or sister receiving too much of a parent's attention is pushed aside or abused.

Every parent can provide participant-observer evidence of the young child's potential for exploitative and abusive attitudes and behavior in relationships with others. Where there are failures of psycho-social and moral development, these traits persist with only slight modification right into later childhood and adulthood. Parents begin the civilizing and socializing process at birth.

Providing body care, food and other pleasure stimulates curiosity in the child. This promotes grasping, sitting, standing, and actual physical growth. As the child achieves one new skill after another and the important caretaker displays approval, the infant becomes "addicted" to a pattern of performance and approval and actively seeks it.

Initially, the caretaker is the only available model and is imitated by the child. Eventually the child takes over, with personal modifications, the behavior of the caretaker as his or her own. In time this occurs with

other members of the family or close social network. In this way, the child learns and assumes much of the behavior pattern of the caretaker and the social network and larger society of which the caretaker is a member. From this base, individual thought and expression emerges.

Talking to and otherwise interacting with the child encourages efforts at vocalization. In the process the child learns to say, "Bye Bye" and wave, one of the first social skills. The accumulation of social skills continues.

The caretaker is able to encourage the toddler to ask for a desired toy, share it with others, or do something else rather than to take it by force. He points out that other children will be mad or will not want to play with him if he pushes or shoves them. The child develops control of impulses, restraint and negotiation skills. The caretaker anticipates the child's movement toward the hot stove and either stops him or urges caution, explaining the danger without the child having to experience the pain and consequences.

The caretaker promotes and enlarges the child's investigative play and interests through attention and questions which support the development of language, thinking, logic and reality testing, etc. The child is motivated to give up harmful and unacceptable behavior, partially because of negative experiences such as injury or unpleasant sensations, but primarily because of the support and approval the important caretaker or parent whose relationship is important.

In this process the child learns to use speech for communication. He learns to think about the consequences of behavior before acting on every impulse. He learns to relate yesterday's experience to today's and tomorrow's. He begins to learn to organize and plan. Diffuse energy is

channeled and made available to be used in sustained and creative activities and learning. Children who have this experience are on their way to becoming the masters of their life energy. They are able to use this energy to achieve rather than be embarrassed by its uncontrolled expression in undesirable behavior.

Through the relationship with the caretaker, the child obtains several critical moral values. The pursuit of pleasure characteristic of childhood makes manipulation, exploitation, lying and stealing "legal" or normal. Parents, in a number of encounters, establish the notion that these traits are undesirable. They establish, or should establish, the notion that honesty, fair play, justice, respect for the rights of others and contributing to the common good are desirable values. The competent caretaker encourages the child to accept attitudes, values and styles which enable him or her to meet their needs without compromising the rights and needs of others.

These traits represent a high level of human functioning and are not easily acquired. They must be established and reinforced over the entire period between infancy and mature young adulthood.

The relationships established with the parent or early caretakers should be transferred to the school or teacher and the child's development should continue. Teachers should set new and appropriate models of social behavior. They should help children develop skills and capacities necessary to cope in the world beyond the home. They should help them learn the rules, laws and values of the larger society. Successful performance in the world beyond the home brings the child the respect and approval of peers, parents,

teachers, and important others. This, in turn, enhances the child's self-esteem and competence and makes successful performance a greater possibility as well as a worthwhile goal in the future.

The achievement habit first established in infancy is strengthened in the school age child who is developing well. Eventually the encouragement of caretakers and important others becomes less necessary to reinforce and motivate achievement and desirable behavior because the child sets and lives up to his or her own developing pro-social inner standards.

Finally, parents help youngsters through the difficult period of adolescence in which the problem of moving from a dependent to a more independent state in a complex and challenging society is often troublesome and traumatic. Parents do this best by allowing and encouraging reasonable independence and by establishing fair and consistent rules. They must be compassionate and tolerant of adolescent struggles, but at the same time they must not abdicate their responsibility for guiding and facilitating the youngster's development. The same is true of school personnel.

Development along all of these important lines mentioned can be impaired when parents and teachers cannot or do not interact with children in appropriate ways. Chaotic conditions in the home and at school can interfere with development. The existence of troublesome and strongly anti-social peer groups can undermine the teaching and modeling of parents and school personnel.

Scientific and technological change over time has complicated the child rearing task.

Science and Technology

At the turn of the century this nation had a horse and buggy level of technology, not greatly advanced over that of the ancient wheel. Most people lived in rural areas and small towns. Mobility was limited and communication with the outside was relatively infrequent. The economy was uncomplicated. Social relationships and expectations between powerful and less powerful people, between adults and children and within families were explicit. Social life was centered around personal institutions--family, church, social clubs and service organizations.

Parents, teachers, ministers, policemen and others came in contact with each other in the course of non-official duties. The teacher sometimes assisted the head of a farm family who couldn't read or write with business matters. The policeman was a deacon in the local church. These and other community leaders held the same job for many years. With limited travel, communication and information, they generally spoke with a "common tongue" about right and wrong attitudes, values and ways of desirable social customs and practices. As the holders of vital and unchallenged information, protectors and providers for the young, they had a great deal of authority.

Obviously abuse of authority was possible under such conditions. The rights and opportunities of minorities, women and children were regularly abused. But these conditions also gave individuals few behavior and expression options and made life quite predictable. It was possible to earn a living or produce basic survival needs--food, clothing and shelter--with a low level of education and training. Various belief systems--from religion to nationalism--reduced uncertainty and anxiety about life conditions.

Despite injustice and poverty, these conditions created a natural climate of community. Belonging was possible, even though in a proscribed place and way for many. Sharing and communal activities needed for survival contributed to a climate of community. In such an environment, the school was more often a trusted and integral part of a community. Parents, teachers, neighbors, fellow church members and others were expected to aid parents in helping their children to grow physically, in their ability to think, psychologically, socially, morally and so on.

If young people did not function well in school there was no real problem. The level of education, training and social skills needed to obtain and hold a job remained low to moderate until the 1940's. When economic conditions in the society were reasonably good, most heads of households could earn a "living wage" or provide goods needed to care for their families. Because change was slow parents were rearing their children as they were reared and for an adulthood like their own, their parents and grandparents before them.

Science and technology moved from the horse and buggy level of sophistication through an automobile, airplane, jet and superjet level to a rocket age level in the short span of 70 years. It is now possible to have breakfast in New York City and late lunch in California. Television brings us information and visual images of attitudes, values and ways from around the world. It is possible to listen to differing opinions about desirable morals, social arrangements and ways on newscasts every hour, if not the half-hour.

Cars and roads have changed us to urban and suburban dwellers. Movement for employment, pleasure and status gains changes the make-up of neighborhoods frequently. Mechanization of farming and related changes have vastly complicated our economy. Mobility, urbanization and technology facilitated the emergence of commercial recreation. It is often presented or performed by professionals, decreasing healthy active personal expression.

These and other scientific and technologically based developments served to increase information but to reduce neighborhood and community intimacy. We are now literally a nation of strangers. There is no "common tongue" about what attitudes, values and ways are right or wrong. Reduced acceptance of religion and other guiding life principles and belief systems have increased uncertainty and anxiety about life's problems and possibilities. Parents and schools are trying to prepare children to function in a future nobody can accurately predict. Earning a living wage requires the highest level of education, training and social skills ever needed before in the history of the world.

Few parents are in a position to promote such levels of development. The task falls heavily on the school. But the school is no longer a trusted and integral part of the neighborhood. School officials often live outside the community. They are often of a different race, religion, income or social style group. They are no longer, with parents and others, the unchallenged holders of vital truths. The climate of community needed to make it possible for the school staff to facilitate psychological and social development, and in turn academic and intellectual development, no longer naturally exists in many communities. It has to be created.

Probably influenced by the training needed in scientific and technological endeavors, teacher education emerged with an almost exclusive focus on techniques for promoting intellectual development. While school teachers and administrators today are highly educated and credentialed people, few are systematically trained to create the kind of experience in schools which aids psychological, social and, in turn, academic and intellectual development of children.

Despite a paralysis of academic learning in many schools, many educators argue that providing a social and psychological growth experience for children is the responsibility of the home exclusively. They view teaching academic skills as their only mission. This denies the inextricable relationship between psychological, social and intellectual development and academic learning outlined above. It ignores the fact that the kind of skills needed by children to function well as adults today and in the future are as much social and psychological as academic or intellectual.

From time to time grave concern is expressed about the slightly declined achievement scores of modern students. Unfortunately no attention has been given to the threshold level of academic achievement needed to perform at a high level at even the most technical and high level jobs in our society. Even less attention has been given to the necessary motivation and character traits. There is no real shortage of persons adequately qualified to hold high skill positions. Indeed, many students are performing at an achievement level high above what is needed. Because of the reduction in unskilled and blue collar jobs, the real shortage is of people with the social and psychological development necessary to hold jobs created by a

scientific, technology based economy. The vast majority of people have the intellectual endowment to do so.

In the past, persons with poor interpersonal skills with low impulse control and other personal limitations could hold fishing, farming and industrial labor jobs. A technology based economy with an increase in service jobs requires good interpersonal skills, social skills and sophistication, education and technical training. A child who cannot function well at home and in school, the mold or model for the adult world functioning, is less likely to fare well in the job market, care for self and family, and contribute positively to the society.

Finally, urbanization facilitated the emergence of a powerful labor movement. Science and technology improved information, communication and mobility and eroded the rationale for the denial of rights to anyone. The Civil Rights Movement gained momentum. These developments significantly changed power relationships and increased economic and social expectations of the vast majority of Americans. The school is expected to play a key role in making greater opportunity available to greater numbers of people.

Because of the reduced control and direction possible from parents, teachers and others, children are in need of social and psychological development which makes possible better inner control, motivation, direction and responsibility. Highly authoritarian child rearing techniques in this age produces self-limiting dependency or increased parent-child conflict and rebellion. Highly permissive techniques produce selfish assertiveness, inadequate life guidelines and rebellion. Many families and schools are structured and function in either excessively authoritarian or permissive ways.

The reality of the scientific and technological age is constant change, interaction with people and ideas that are different and increased options for young people in attitudes, values and ways. Thus they must be reared so that they develop an initial pro-social set of attitudes, values and ways; flexible enough to be changed with the demands of a changing society; and which permit tolerance of the attitudes, values and ways of others. Young people must be prepared to be good problem analysts and solvers, decision makers, planners, and must be capable of the organization necessary to implement their plans. They must be competent and motivated to participate in a political and economic system in which negotiation for rather than imposition of rights, opportunities and limits is becoming more and more a reality and perhaps the only viable alternative.

Family Security

Relatively secure parents are best able to carry out the child rearing task necessary to prepare children to function well in this complex age. The simple economic system of the past made the provision of basic needs--food, clothing, shelter--reasonably possible for most people. Being able to provide for one's family gave most parents a sense of security. In addition security came from a sense of belonging in churches, close knit communities and other social networks. Religious and other belief systems contributed to this climate or sense of security.

Science and technology continues to decrease unskilled and blue collar job opportunities and to weaken sustaining belief systems. As mentioned, these developments have eliminated the natural sense of community which once existed in neighborhoods. Economic relief has been provided in a demeaning

way. No systematic effort has been made to make it possible for recipients to obtain a sense of value, worth and resultant security even though they cannot provide for their families and thereby contribute to society. Indeed their motivation to do so has been weakened.

The work ethos and upward mobility notions are still widely held by individuals in this society. From radio and television comments, articles and in daily contact with social workers, shcool officials, grocery store clerks, policemen and elsewhere, persons unable to care for themselves and their families experience abuse. This intensifies whatever psychological or social problem that interferes with their ability to work in the first place. When there is no work available, the outrage is even greater. It makes it that much more difficult for them to prepare their children for school.

Frustration in the effort to participate in the society in a pro-social way often leads to participation in anti-social or illegal economic and social systems. A compatible and competing set of attitudes, values and ways exist in such systems--selling stolen goods, illegal gambling, prostitution, drug use and sales, beating the system (perceived as the enemy), etc. These attitudes, values and ways are transmitted to children just as mainstream pro-social messages and ways are transmitted. As large numbers of affected persons are created, schools often find themselves in areas where the attitudes, values and ways are incompatible with academic learning beyond a minimum level.

Many families function well but transmit a culture different to that of the school. This can be a source of conflict and insecurity. Differences

in attitudes, values and ways can lead to erroneous or distorted assumptions about the abilities, interests and motives of children and parents on one side and about the school personnel on the other. Conflict between home and school is more likely in this situation. Because the school represents the mainstream culture, fear of an inability to relate well to the school contributes to an insecurity held by culturally different communities and families. This is true when the families in a school community and the school personnel are different in any significant way--income, education, belief systems, etc.

Until very recently, little attention was given to helping parents and teachers develop child rearing techniques which are appropriate for this time in our history. Because technological changes have outrun child rearing changes, serious inter-generational problems often exist. As a result, an increased number of children from middle-income families challenging the attitudes, values and ways of the mainstream society present problems for schools. Thus even families with adequate income, other sources of security, and members of the mainstream culture are often overwhelmed by the child rearing task.

The School and the Family: A Rationale and Relationship Model

Child rearing is a universal function of the family. In spite of rapid past and future scientific and technological developments, this task is not likely to change significantly. Because of the high level and sustained period of development needed to function in present and future society, the school must be intimately involved with parents in the child rearing and educational task. The latter, education, cannot proceed adequately without the former, appropriate child rearing.

The child rearing task has been complicated by the loss of a natural sense of community. Trust and reinforcement of attitudes, values and ways between home and school authority figures no longer naturally exists. There is less of a natural transfer of the authority and affection from home to school necessary to manage and motivate child behavior and learning. Today the sense of community and trust needed for school personnel to serve as parent surrogates as in the past must be carefully created.

Even in the past conditions never existed to the extent necessary to promote high levels of academic and social development. The potential of many students was not realized. But they could easily be absorbed into the work force of the past. Today young people without reasonably high levels of social and educational development cannot be easily absorbed. Their frustration, anger and alienation is the source of many social problems, all of which can grow worse in future decades without more effective child development.

To fully address these problems, community economic development with resultant employment is necessary. When this is not possible, unemployment with dignity will be required. More attention must be given to the way cities and neighborhoods can create a climate of community, value and worth among its families. But it is possible for most schools to address this need now, even without the macro-societal changes needed. I will present an example of the process and development of positive family and school relations which created a climate of community and promoted improved social and academic performance without macro-societal change.

The Yale Child Study Center Schools Program:

Since 1968 the Yale Child Study Center has collaborated in a school development program in an almost all black, low-income section of New Haven, Connecticut. The program started in two elementary schools and continued for five years. In 1973, the Child Study Center withdrew from one school because of internal conflicts. Minimal services were provided until 1975 when a Social Skills Curriculum Project was developed in the remaining Martin Luther King School, a 350 student, K-4 institution. Starting in 1977, a field test of the intervention process has been conducted in a third school and a similar project is in a 5-9 or middle school.

The Child Study Center uses a preventive approach which focuses on the complex network of relationships among all the participants in the school program--administrators, teachers, support staff, children and parents. The intervention team--two social workers, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a teacher--is particularly concerned with developing a mutuality of purpose among school people, parents and university staff. Recognizing that there is no "quick fix" to the complicated problems of schools, the choice was to develop long-term strategies for institutional change through working closely with one or two schools, eventually moving the process throughout the New Haven School System and beyond.

In ten years at King, there has been gradual neighborhood change from a population with a small core of middle-income black families to a predominantly low-income group with a disproportionately high number of transient and very troubled families. In 1969, King ranked 32nd of the 33 New Haven elementary schools in the Metropolitan Achievement Test

in reading and math. There was a high student and teacher absentee rate, much conflict between children, between children and staff, and between parents and the school.

In 1976 and '77, with a population of many more poor and marginal families than in the beginning, King students who had been in the program two years or more, using the median, scored at grade level on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in reading and math. Including all students, they had the highest scores of any of the 22 Title I schools in the city. The school had the 3rd best city-wide attendance in 1976 and second best in 1977, a significant indicator of positive school climate. While many factors were responsible for the change, the involvement of parents and the subsequent improvement of the relationship between the school and its community or families has perhaps been the most significant.

Like many 1960's school intervention programs involving collaboration between mainstream institutions and poor black communities, this one had a troublesome first year. Conflicts over the value of open education, race related problems and decision-making authority were but a few of the many problem issues. Parents were angry with "the establishment"--the New Haven Public Schools, Yale, New Haven city officials, etc. They were concerned that these people enjoyed prestige, power and privilege but failed in their responsibility to improve the quality of education, opportunities and conditions of life for people in poor and minority neighborhoods.

The initial engagement with parents was heated, potentially all-consuming, and destructive to the program. But it was also the energy source which eventually made the program work. The very parents most involved in the initial fighting about whether or not Yale should be involved in their school became the first parents to participate in child development and parenting programs, work on decision-making committees, and special projects they helped to initiate and develop.

The struggle between parents and professionals, whether expressed actively or by the passive hostility of non-involvement, is not a necessary ingredient for successful parent participation in school programs, but it is common. A longer, closer period of pre-program collaboration and planning, better organization and other situational factors might have prevented this struggle. The point here, however, is that the program leaders engaged the parents in a dialogue about problems, needs and goals and established the mechanisms to address and achieve them. The mechanisms and processes devised to achieve program goals were based on social science and behavior principles. Parent-school engagement based on such knowledge is needed widely.

The fact that the school was not a natural part of the community was a major cause of mistrust and alienation between home and school. The intervention team also noted that because teachers and administrators were not trained to deal with behavior problems or to create a climate of community, relationships between administrators and teachers or between teachers and support staff were troublesome. The resultant conflict and difficulties made good relationships between children and teachers impossible in all but the most exceptional situations. The team created a governing board, a Steering Committee, designed to deal with these problems.

The Steering Committee was representative of all the participants in the program--administrators, parents, teachers and support staff. Sub-committees were responsible for personnel selection, extracurricular and curricular program development. The Steering Committee served as a problem identification, resource identification, program development and implementation, evaluation group. It established priorities and overall school program direction. Because this body was representative, each group in the school could feel that its interests were being represented at the decision-making level.

Because such an arrangment can create a paralysis of analysis and bog down in power struggles, the body was advisory to the principal who had legal responsibility for the educational program. On the other hand, the principals understood that they would lose parent interest if they were not responsive to group input.

The make-up of the governance body facilitated the growth of trust and cooperation between all the participants in the educational process. Had the program been in middle and secondary schools, students would have been involved in the governance process to the extent that they could make responsible contributions. The participation of parents in program planning and decision-making gave them an investment in the outcome of the school program.

Parent participation took place at three levels. A core of 25 to 30 parents in each school were responsible for planning extracurricular activities for each school along with school staff. Parents who were comfortable and successful at this level were usually selected by their peers to represent them on the Steering Committee, the most influential

and demanding level of participation. Parents who for one reason or another could not be involved at the other two levels turned out for school functions because they were encouraged to do so by participating parents who had a high investment in the outcome of programs they helped develop. Also, participating and non-participating parents came to trust the school staff.

Summer workshops in which parents and teachers learned and socialized together reduced most of the stereotypes they held about each other. The workshops permitted parents and teachers to get to know each other as people rather than professionals and non-professionals, middle-income and low-income, black and white people and so on. The workshops permitted parents and teachers to explore old and new concepts in education.

The involvement of parents also permitted the healthy elements of the culture and community life to be brought into the school. Without this, the culture of the school is often a foreign body in many communities. Bake sales, fashion shows, gospel choir presentations and the like were activities familiar to parents from their church participation, permitted the raising of funds in support of academic programs, permitted lively extra-curricular school activities and fostered a positive relationship between home and school.

The intervention or Mental Health Team focused on health, not illness or weakness. The Team helped administrators understand and appreciate the value of shared decision-making. The social workers who had major responsibility for the day-to-day work of the program helped parents develop the skills necessary to participate in decision-making--privately helping the parent organization president learn to run an effective meeting, helping the secretary keep notes and the treasurer learn to keep a financial record.

In return parents shared insights about their children and contributed to a friendly climate of accountability often missing when professionals have sole responsibility for what goes on in schools. For example, parents working with staff were particularly good in selecting new school personnel with the traits that would contribute to a positive climate of living and learning in the schools.

The Mental Health Team helped teachers develop child rearing techniques they should have but were not taught in school. Child development and child rearing lecture techniques initially utilized to do so were not successful. The problem was less a lack of knowledge than the ability to apply it under stress in the classroom. In case conferences and in classroom observations the Team and individual teachers observed and discussed behavior and learning problems together and worked out management approaches based on social science, educational and behavioral principles. In most cases, such approaches were sufficient. In rare cases, children received individual therapy.

The case conferences proved so successful at King School that teachers began to come to the presentations of other teachers voluntarily. Eventually these conferences turned into seminars in which teachers shared suggestions about the management of social and educational problems. Gradually teacher inquiries and perceptions changed from what was right and wrong with a child's behavior and performance to what was going on psychosocially with the child; from the notion that a child was smart or dumb to a search for the learning problem and a focus on strengths. The search for problems was as much in the area of school procedures and operations as on the acting-up or withdrawn child and the poor learner.

As problem after problem was reduced, teachers were able to give more energy to teaching and academic curriculum development, identify problems and strengths peculiar to children in this particular school. As conditions improved parents found themselves called to school less and less for problems and more and more to contribute to the positive social and learning process of the school. This situation is largely responsible for the fact that performances and programs at King School went from a parent attendance of 15 to 25 to 200 to 250, almost 400 at one Christmas program with a school population of only 350.

At this stage, innovative programs worked. A special program for apathetic and turned off youngsters was successful. A program to increase continuity of relationships by keeping teachers with the same class for two years was successful. Non-successful programs and programs proposed by outsiders could be evaluated and accepted or rejected on the basis of school needs rather than because they were supposed to be "progressive." Many floundering school programs are overwhelmed by the nonsystematic introduction of "progressive" innovations.

With growing success, future planning took place in a climate of hope. Parents themselves initiated child rearing seminars. This made it possible for the Mental Health Team to introduce approaches appropriate for this modern age. Parents planned and participated in programs with staff designed to familiarize themselves with the academic subject areas. Some eventually became involved in a paid classroom assistant program. Parents and teachers eventually developed a curriculum which integrated the teaching of the arts, social and academic skills.

One social skills unit on politics involved inviting the mayoralty candidates into the schools. Parents financed a bus tour to introduce children to problems and opportunities in the city and explained the responsibility of public officials to address these issues. Teachers and parents prepared the children to ask the candidates responsible questions and to engage in a give and take discussiosn with them. The children were prepared to serve as hosts and hostesses for the affair. They received a meaningful language arts lesson through related invitation, thank you note, letter and report writing. Student performances utilized their training in the arts. In this way, low-income children were being introduced to and receiving the social skills necessary to participate in the mainstream adult society.

The participation of parents and the inclusion of community-based activities assured that the program was culturally relevant. Indeed, when parents and teachers work together, cultural differences are not as different as it first appears; differences are appreciated and respected.

This approach was useful in a low-income, predominantly black community in New Haven. It is not being proposed as an ideal model for parent-school relations everywhere. What is being suggested is that there is a need for a problem identification, resource identification, program development and evaluation group in all schools. A systematic effort to identify and reduce the source of distrust and conflict is needed in all schools. Parental involvement in the school program is perhaps not needed in the imtimate way of the King-Child Study Center Program, but can restore the

climate of trust and bring about better home-school and intergenerational understanding and relations.

Schools cannot continue to attempt to teach academic skills in a social climate which works against it; which inteferes with healthy psychological and social skill development. Schools cannot continue to ignore the fact that academic learning is inextricably related to social and psychological development. The high level of such development now required for good adult functioning necessitates a school climate in which such development can take place.

A word of caution is important here. Other schools and individuals have looked at one or more components of the King-Child Study Center Program and other comprehensive programs and attempted to transplant them in their own setting. This will not work. The process is more important in establishing a good home-school climate and a good in-school climate than program content. Comprehensive school change programs involving every aspect of the school program and all the people involved are necessary. The governance body which mediates this process is critical. In some cases a single principal may be able to do so. But this is less possible and less beneficial to the principal, parents, students and teachers than group participation.

I have overly simplified a very complex process. I have not discussed the many mistakes, frustrations, disappointments and traumatic incidents involved in this particular program. My purpose is to promote discussion and to show that improved school operation and home-school relations can take place in even socioeconomically stressed communities.